

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SP-02 L-01 INR-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00

NSC-05 NSCE-00 RSC-01 /035 W
----- 093692

R 231705Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8401

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR

USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 4564

LIMDIS

USCINCSO FOR POLAD

GUATEMALA PASS ROCAP

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: HO, ES, PFOR

SUBJECT: GOH CABINET CRISIS AND ITS RELATION TO GOH -
GOES DISPUTE

REF: SAN SALVADOR 4205

1. MINFIN ACOSTA BONILLA RECEIVED ME OCTOBER 22 IN LONG,
TWO-HOUR CONVERSATION MARKED BY UNUSUAL DEGREE OF WARMTH
AND CANDIDNESS ON HIS PART.

2. ACOSTA CONFIRMED WHAT EMBASSY HAD ALREADY HEARD,
I.E. THAT CURRENT CABINET CRISIS HAD ITS ORIGIN IN
DIFFERENCES OVER MEDIATION DOCUMENT PRESENTED BY FONMIN
BATRES AT CABINET MEETING ON OCTOBER 11. IT WAS NOT
THAT HE HAD VOTED AGAINST BATRES' DOCUMENT, HE SAID
(THERE IS NO ROLL-CALL AT CABINET MEETINGS; INSTEAD
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CONSENSUS IS SOUGHT, EVEN IF IT REQUIRES SEVERAL MEETINGS,

WHICH WOULD BE ORIGIN OF OLA'S REPUTATION FOR INDECISIVENESS). ACOSTA SAID HE HAD IN FACT SEEN A COPY OF THE DOCUMENT ON THE PLANE RETURNING WITH BATRES FROM MIAMI AND HAD PRONOUNCED IT "PRACTICABLE". AT THE OCTOBER 11 MEETING ACOSTA HAD MERELY REGISTERED "A NEW POINT OF VIEW" WHICH, HE STRESSED, HAD OCCURRED TO HIM AT THE LAST MOMENT. IT WAS THAT THE GOH, AS A FAITHFUL UPHOLDER OF THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM, OUGHT NOT TO BE A PARTY TO A SOLUTION TO A DISPUTE WITH ANOTHER OAS MEMBER STATE WHICH IN FACT SHORT-CIRCUITED THE BASIC AGREEMENTS OF THE INTER-AMERICAN SYSTEM AND THUS SERVED TO FURTHER UNDERMINE IT. HE ARGUED THAT THE GOH OUGHT TO AGAIN PLACE MATTER BEFORE THE COMMITTEE OF SEVEN AND, IF THE OAS FAILED TO PRODUCE A SETTLEMENT, THEN HONDURAS SHOULD RESORT TO THE ICJ. HE SAID IT SHOULD BE DONE IMMEDIATELY, TO USE UP ALL GOH OPTIONS BEFORE THE DATE AT WHICH THE GOES REACHES ITS PACT OF GOBOTA DEADLINE.

3. BATRES, ARGUING IN TURN THAT THIS WAS WELL KNOWN TO BE COMPLETELY UNACCEPTABLE TO THE GOES AND CONTRARY AS WELL TO HIS MANDATE TO WORK OUT A PRAGMATIC SOLUTION UNHAMPERED BY NARROW, LEGALISTIC CONSIDERATIONS, WENT TO OLA AFTER THE MEETING AND SAID THAT HE FELT THAT HE HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO RESIGN. OLA HAD MERELY TOLD HIM TO GO TO GUATEMALA TO DISCUSS THE MATTER WITH BORGONOVO, WHO PREDICTABLY HAD REACTED WITH DISMAY TO THE GOH POSITION AND PRONOUNCED IT INACCEPTABLE. WHEN BATRES RETURNED TO TEGUCIGALPA, HE REITERATED HIS DESIRE TO RESIGN, BUT OLA AGAIN SENT HIM OFF TO NEW YORK FOR THE CEPAL MEETING, URGING HIM MEANWHILE TO "MEDIATE" OVER THE MATTER.

4. BY THIS TIME, THE MINISTERS OF LABOR (FONSECA) AND ECONOMY (BENNATON) ALSO HAD PRESENTED THEIR ORAL RESIGNATIONS IN SOLIDARITY WITH BATRES. FONSECA, ACCORDING TO ACOSTA, UPON INQUIRY HAD ADVANCED AS HIS PRINCIPAL REASON THAT HE FELT OBLIGED TO RESIGN BECAUSE OF HIS RELATIONSHIP (BROTHER-IN-LAW) TO BATRES.

5. I TOLD ACOSTA WHAT WHILE IT WAS NOT PROPER FOR ME TO PASS JUDGMENT ON THE RELATIVE MERITS OF CONFLICTING

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VIEWPOINTS IN INTRA-CABINET DISCUSSIONS, I WAS GREATLY SADDENED BY THE UNTIMELY CONFUSION AND UNCERTAINTY WHICH THESE EVENTS WOULD SURELY GENERATE ABROAD, AND THE POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS ON FOREIGN ASSISTANCE WHICH SUCH PUBLIC DISPUTES COULD POSSIBLY ENTAIL. THE REAL VICTIMS, I SAID, WERE THE THOUSANDS OF HAPLESS VICTIMS OF THE RECENT HURRICANE WHO HAD NO UNDERSTANDING OR APPRECIATION OF THE LEGAL NICETIES OF THE CASE. THIS SEEMED TO

CARRY SOME WEIGHT WITH ACOSTA, WHO ADMITTED HE HAD NOT
WEIGHED THE MATTER FROM THIS VIEWPOINT.

6. HE ASSERTED, HOWEVER, THAT HIS POSITION WAS BASED UPON
MORE THAN LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS; THAT THERE WERE VERY
PRACTICAL POLITICAL FACTORS INVOLVED. TO ABANDON THE
LEGAL BASIS OF THE GOH POSITION BY ACCEPTING THE MEDIATION
FORMULA WOULD ENAGLE RAMON CRUZ AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE
LATE DEPOSED REGIME TO EMERGE AS PUBLIC HEROES BY
CHARGING THAT THE OLA GOVERNMENT WAS YIELDING ON THE
BASICS OF THE HONDURAN POSITION WHICH THEY HAD FOUGHT SO
HARD TO PRESERVE. HE AGREED, HOWEVER, THAT THE GOES
IN ACCEPTING THE NEW FORMULA WOULD ALSO HAVE TO FACE
CERTAIN DOMESTIC OPPOSITION.

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ACTION ARA-06

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AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 TEGUCIGALPA 4564

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7. BATRES AND ACOSTA HAVE HAD AT LEAST ONE MEETING SINCE
OCTOBER 11 AT WHICH ACOSTA SAYS HE URGED BATRES TO RECONSIDER
HIS RESIGNATION. AT THAT TIME TOO HE ADVANCED A FURTHER IDEA

TO WHICH HE SAID BATRES AGREED, NAMELY THAT THE GOH AND GOES, AS A FIRST STEP BEFORE ANY DISCUSSION OF THE BASIC ISSUES, SHOULD MUTUALLY DECLARE THEIR STATE OF WAS AT AN END. THIS, ACOSTA ARGUES, WOULD FACILITATE SOLUTIONS TO THESE ISSUES.

8. ACOSTA GRATUITOUSLY REFERRED TO RUMORS THAT HIS POSITION WAS INSPIRED BY HIS OWN ALLEGED VAULTING POLITICAL ASPIRATIONS. HE CATEGORICALLY DENIED THEM. HE SAID HE AND BATRES WERE LONG-TIME FRIENDS WITH NEIGHBORING LAW OFFICES AND THAT IT WAS INCONCEIVABLE THAT HE (ACOSTA) SHOULD BE MOVED BY ANY ALLEGED PERSONAL RANCOR AGAINST BATRES. HE BELIEVES THE CABINET SHOULD MEET AGAIN ON THE ISSUE AND APPEARED TO THINK THAT WITH TIME THE CABINET DIFFERENCES WOULD DISAPPEAR. HE SAID HE WOULD BE WILLING TO ACCEPT A NEW CABINET CONSENSUS IN CONFIDENTIAL

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FAVOR OF BATRES' DRAFT, ON THE CONDITION THAT HIS OWN OPPOSING POSITION AND REASONS THEREFORE BE MADE A MATTER OF RECORD.

9. COMMENT: ACOSTA'S POSTURE IN THIS MATTER CLEARLY IS ONE THAT WOULD ENABLE HIM TO PRESERVE HIS OWN POLITICAL OPTIONS, A POSITION SEEMINGLY SOMEWHAT SHORT OF STATEMANLIKE, GIVEN THE GREAT NATIONAL ISSUES AT STAKE. SHORT OF A REVERSAL OF THE CABINET'S POSITION, OR A DIRECT PLEA FROM OLA, I CAN NOT READILY CONCEIVE OF BATRES' WITHDRAWING HIS RESIGNATION. I I MEAN TO HAVE A TALK WITH HIM SOON AFTER HIS RETURN ON OCTOBER 23 TO SOUND OUT HIS INTENTIONS. I WILL ALSO SPEAK WITH COS LOPEZ. IN ESSENCE WHAT ACOSTA IS PROPOUNDING, HOWEVER LOGICAL, IS WHAT THE GOES IS MOST APPREHENSIVE ABOUT. SHOULD THE GOH BECOME LOCKED INTO THIS COUSE, THE MOMENTUM TOWARD A SETTLEMENT WITH THE GOES DERIVED FROM THE BORGONOVO-BATRES NEGOTIATIONS AND THE CURRENT PROPITIOUS ATMOSPHERE AFFORDED BY THE RECENT DISASTER WILL BE LOST, PERHAPS FOR A LONG TIME TO COME. I WILL SEEK "BY INDIRECTION TO FIND DIRECTION OUT" AND DISCREETLY ENCOURAGE WAYS OF SALVAGING THIS FLEETING BUT GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE SETTLEMENT OF A DISPUTE WHICH HAS PLAGUED CENTRAL AMERICA FOR MUCH TOO LONG A TIME.
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